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ABSTRACT

The first quarter's activities and accomplishments of the Educational Policy Research Center in conducting an assessment and policy analysis of the Education Satellite Communication Demonstration are described and defined. Revisions of the study's original design are provided as background. Discussions of how to achieve the right conceptual mesh between data gathering and policy analysis are reported, along with start-up problems of organizational structure and assignment of responsibilities. Meetings with National Institute of Education representatives and others are listed. Tasks for the next quarter are outlined. (SK)

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QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

Contract No. NIE C-74-0046

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

June 25, 1974 to October 10, 1974

SURC-TR-74-576

STUDY OF EDUCATION SATELLITE COMMUNICATION DEMONSTRATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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INTRODUCTION

On June 25, 1974 contract NIE C-74-0046 was awarded to the Educational Policy Research Center pursuant to NIE's acceptance of the EPRC's amended Design for the Assessment and Policy Analysis of the ESCD. The present document reports the progress made by the EPRC Satellite Project team during the period June 25, 1974 to October 10, 1974.

This first quarterly report is divided into the following sections:

I. Background of the First Quarter's Events
II. Conceptual Orientation
III. Internal Organizational Structure
IV. Activities
    A. Staffing
    B. Other Activities
V. Tasks to be Accomplished During the Next Quarter
    A. Conceptualization
    B. Internal Organization
    C. Activities

I. Background of the First Quarter's Events

This reporting period followed efforts by the contractor and NIE to negotiate accord between the EPRC's Design and the objectives of our study as perceived by NIE. The outcomes of these negotiations are articulated in our June 17 addendum and our June 25 Statement of Work. They reflect significant revisions of our pre-contract Design at four levels:

1. the conceptual category in our Design which will receive relatively greater stress is that devoted to Federal policy analysis,

2. our final report will express an analytical sensitivity to the history of the entire ESCD experience with emphasis on the critical events which shape that experience,
3. the scope of our study will be more narrowly restricted to the ESCD itself and not to telecommunications projects generally, and
4. we will ignore investigations of educational attainment and the problem of attributing changed educational outcomes to the ESCD.

Although these revisions and refinements constitute important redistributions of the emphases enunciated in our Design, that piece will continue to provide the basic conceptual apparatus for integrating our study into a unified framework for policy analysis. Specifically, the Design will guide our historical display of the ESCD by supplying the analytical categories which will direct our focus to those features of the ESCD which can be generalized for the benefit of future Federal policy formulation.

II. Conceptual Orientation

Still underway are our deliberations about how to achieve the right conceptual mesh between data gathering and policy analysis. Currently being discussed are specific ways to harmonize:

1. a downward thrust from above to get finer resolution on the conceptual penumbra of our scope of research by focusing on the interests of our final reports' audience, and
2. an upward thrust from below to get clear about the kinds of data which might ultimately be relevant to the policy formulating concerns of our audience.

A purely illustrative example of discussion topics concerning the first thrust is whether public policymakers are interested in whether a state or local organization is

1. effective in collaborating with the advancement of a Federal objective,

2. easy or difficult to cope with if it figures as an important factor in implementing a program decision, and
3. vulnerable to unintended effects.

III. Internal Organizational Structure

Also still in the works is the harmonization of our organizational resource distribution with the above mesh between the policy analysis conceptual configuration and the data collection area. Our present thinking is that organizational resource distribution should proceed along two lines: according to geographical differentiation and according to the conceptual differentiation of research categories (these categories, methodologically, form the theoretical interface between the spectrum of policy issues and the data-collection evidence base).

The first distribution of responsibilities according to geographical and ESCD operations distinctions is the easiest to execute and has probably received its final structure. The second configuration of responsibility distribution has not yet been firmed up largely because the conceptual mesh mentioned in II. awaits final elaboration.

It should be noted that both of these types of responsibility distribution share these characteristics:

1. the data in each geographical or conceptual sector will be initially assembled as a history of critical events, and
2. each geographical or conceptual sector will have assigned to it one person as his/her primary responsibility and will also have assigned to it several back-up people as their secondary responsibilities.

So the scheme of our organizational resource distribution will ultimately be expressible by way of two matrices which respectively spell out geographical area and research area staff responsibilities. The second of these is still being worked out. The first should look something like this:

Responsibility Distribution

ESCD Decisionmaking and Operations

Level of Responsibility	Region	FRMS	ARC	Alaska	Washington
Primary		Baldwin	Root	PCI	Haynes
Secondary		Porter	Baldwin	Porter	Baldwin
Consulting			Hoke	Root	

IV. Activities

A. Staffing

The first task completed during this period was filling out the EPRC team in a manner compatible with the modifications of our scope of work. Of major concern to EPRC during this period was the matching of staff experience and expertise to the redefined tasks to be performed by the team. The principle personnel changes were the recruitments of Fred Baldwin as full-time senior researcher and Steve Porter as administrative research associate and project coordinator. Prior to assuming their full-time duties, Baldwin and Porter familiarized themselves with the background of the ESCD and with the EPRC's general perspective on its scope of work.

B. Other Activities

Besides several team meetings preparatory to launching a full-scale effort, initial contact was made with Practical Concepts Incorporated in Washington on July 11. At that meeting, the regions of responsibilities of

PCI and EPRC were delimited by NIE representative Dick Holt.

The period from September 3 to October 10 has seen a vigorous and energetic gearing-up for the team's major tasks. Our activities have been primarily devoted to

1. deciding how to match up conceptually data collection efforts with the final policy analysis goals,
2. organizing accordingly, and
3. establishing good working relationships with the three ESCD Project staffs.

Initial contact with the Federation of Rocky Mountain States ESCD component was made on September 17 and 18. Stressed in the meetings with the FRMS representatives, Ken Lokey and Austin Connolly, were

1. informative descriptions of past, present and expected FRMS ESCD activities,
2. a comparable presentation by the EPRC team,
3. attempts by both groups to locate possible areas of duplication between the FRMS in-house evaluation program and the EPRC study, and
4. discussions aimed at devising methods for maximizing EPRC's acquisition of relevant data with a minimum of interference in local FRMS ESCD processes.

Initial contact with representatives of the Appalachian Regional Commission component of the ESCD took place on September 30. Present besides the EPRC team were Hal Morse, Robert Schumann, and Dennis Goldstein of ARC and Dick Holt of NIE. An agenda similar to that observed in the FRMS ESCD meeting was followed although greater stress was placed on both the nature of the planned EPRC on-site studies and the requirements for their successful prosecution.

Initial contact was made on October 8 and 9 with PCI, the data collecting group attached to the Alaskan ESCD component. Present besides the EPRC team were Al Feiner, Roger Popper and Adrian Parmeter of PCI, Jim Orvik of the Northern Center for Educational Research, and Dick Holt

and Guy Gruen of NIE Beyond trading information and research perspectives and developing intercommunication guidelines, the parties involved got further clarification of NIE's objectives in studying the ESCD. Reemphasis was placed on

1. treating demand as an organizational act,
2. assessing the utility of on-site inspections and audience behavior analysis for Federal education demonstrations,
3. understanding the role of Federal agencies in (a) the development of the ESCD, (b) related utilizations of technology, and (c) Alaska's development of a satellite communications system, and
4. understanding the extent to which Federal involvement helps or hinders the development of satellite communications systems generally.

V. Tasks to be Accomplished During the Next Quarter

A. Conceptualization

1. Distinguish in greater specificity the Federal educational policy issues we think can be profitably informed by the ESCD experience,
2. Describe those issues in such a way that natural and unstrained linkages with the research categories can be identified,
3. Explode the research categories into many more finely distinguished sub-categories in such a way that direct ties with the data gathering efforts can be established without sacrificing the logically organized overall structure of the research conceptual scheme.

B. Internal Organization

1. Make final decisions about distributing responsibilities and tasks; the distribution will respect both the congeniality and the effectiveness/efficiency of the ties between personnel and responsibility sectors,
2. Finalize a procedural strategy for accumulating the relevant data in an efficient way from all of our external resources, and

3. Finalize a procedural strategy for maximizing in-house collaboration and communication without undue interference with the prosecution of individual tasks.

C. Activities

1. Continue generally to develop satisfying and productive relations with the external organizations responsible for gathering the field data, and
2. Visit each ESCD region at least once to get acquainted with ESCD project personnel and operations; whether or not these trips will include demonstration-site visits will depend on the outcomes of joint deliberations among the EPRC and ESCD Project staffs.